

# OUR SHORT STORY PAGE

## AN INTERNATIONAL MATCH

By HERBERT D. WARD

**D**ARNELL, by all that's holy!"

"Bobby Litchfield! How ripping!"

Two men, young in the hope of life, stood in the swaying aisle of the Pullman and clasped each other's hands.

"Where are you going?" asked Litchfield. He had a certain air of proprietorship peculiar to young Americans of renowned family or great wealth. "When did you get in? Why didn't you let me know?"

The Englishman looked down upon his friend with a boyish joy that made his angular face almost handsome. He was tall, with the promise of that staidness which had distinguished the earls of Portchester for eight generations.

"Litchfield, this morning! You Americans are so extraordinarily rapid—don't you know, I put up at the Union League, Summer, don't you know. Ripping old chap. Insisted that I should catch the limited for White Heather—wired you at the University."

"By Jove, Darnell, it's great to have you at the Hunt Ball. What a card for the patronesses—let alone the hostesses. Did you bring your clubs?"

The young Earl of Portchester smiled.

"I say," he began, "it's dooed queer, but I was thinking of you when I packed the bally things. Do you remember that one-club match of ours when we only used a putter, and you got me one down? I practised with a putter all summer—"

"That's fine," Bobby's eyes glistened with the prospect of battle—"but I won't take advantage of you. Let's make it a one-club match—hole play—the loser—"

"Oh, I say," interrupted Lord Darnell, "I never thought of changing the club. How ripping! The same old stakes, I suppose. I'll go you a guinea a hole on the side."

"Done!" The American and the Englishman clasped hands over the match, and then raised their eyes for the first time from each other, but not quickly enough to surprise the lightning change of direction taken by four other eyes.

For some minutes the two young ladies in the seats opposite had been very much interested in the masculine meeting and the sporty challenge. Although it was not yet odd ball, the girls wore their duffy bonnets and all the extravagant wraps of their class. A single glance could tell the experienced that every item of their clothes, from their delicate chiffon veils to their dainty shoes, was absolutely perfect.

The girl opposite the Englishman was one of those ravishing brunettes who, since the beginning of the world, have been the cause of wars and famine. She was of middle height, of a thrilling figure, with lacquered lips, and the surge of color through an olive cheek that makes the heart leap to touch such velvet petals. She was a vivid contrast to the angular, blond earl, who gazed upon the picture as if stricken with a fixed idea.

"By Jove!" he muttered, turning at last to his companion. "How extraordinary!"

"Yes," replied Bobby, whose own color had heightened a trifle. "The blond type is said to be the most persistent—"

"Darnell," interrupted Darnell, "I meant the other. Didn't you see her?"

But Bobby Litchfield turned unblushingly again to the girl opposite him and once more feasted his eyes on the stately blonde who gave the perfect impression of a woman unconscious of scrutiny. Her profile contrasted powerfully with his own swarthy, impetuous countenance.

"When," he ejaculated under his breath, "Isn't she wonderful? I wonder—I wonder—he put a hand on the Englishman's knee—who she is, and where she's going? Seems to me I've seen her before."

For about fifty miles the four young people alternately eyed each other in a well-bred and furtive way which could not have annoyed the most exacting chaperone. At last Lord Darnell could stand it no longer.

"I've got to have a smoke, old man. Where do you do it in this bally train?"

Both got up. But whether still uncertain from the five days at sea, or whether because he was more used to the rigidity of an English express, as soon as the Englishman arose to his feet he lurched. At that instant the train took a curve at the rate of a half a minute. Before the Earl of Portchester could recover himself, he was shot as from a aeroplane and found himself floundering on the arm of the chair occupied by the girl opposite, his own hands entangled indifferently with her neck and hair in his struggle to regain his balance.

The incident was so unexpected and the link Englishman's efforts toward equilibrium were so ludicrous that Bobby Litchfield, who was sitting next the blond girl and then stared up and down the whole car.

"Oh, I say," gasped Darnell, "I beg your pardon—really?" He made a dive for his cap between the two chairs, and finally raised himself to his full height with a very red and disheveled face. The brunette regarded him laughingly.

"It's customary, Darnell, in this country," Bobby glared at his friend with quiet severity—"to offer a lady your cap when you sit in her lap. You see, ladies," with a mock bow, "he's only an Englishman. You must excuse him."

"Oh, I say, really?" the Earl of Portchester looked from one to the other in honest bewilderment—"It was so dooed sudden, don't you know?" He took out a silver card case upon which a coat of arms was modestly engravé, and with a guard's hand presented to the ruffled brunette a postcard extensively engraved. It was thus that the Lieutenant of the Royal Lancashire Lancers lurched into fate. The girl instinctively put out her gloved hand and took the card.

"And this," the Englishman put his arm within his friend's, as if he were doing the most natural thing in the world—"is my sponsor in the States. Mr. Robert Litchfield of New York and London."

This was going further than any of the other three had bargained for. The whole car craned toward the quarter. For a few seconds the waiting was tense, while the girls flicked wireless messages from blue to black and black to blue. Then they preened themselves, accepted the adventure, and capitulated. The brunette fluttered.

"I," she said, "am Miss Brown, and my companion is Miss Smith."

Of course, they dined together. After the men had smoked and talked about everything else but their present adventure—as men will—and had returned, the lights were glaring, and the window panes had become Claude Lorraine mirrors. Almost before they knew it, the little private station of the White

Heather Country Club was reached. Here the express deferentially stopped. The young people did not say much. Their casual friendship had just gone far enough to promise intimacy if the chance offered, and regret if they never saw one another again.

"There!" said the brunette, hurrying ahead of the tall Englishman. "They've sent for us. You needn't bother any more. Thank you very much. Come on, Edith. Here, Johnson! Take our bags. The trunks can be sent up later." The chauffeur and footman tipped their caps.

"Oh, I say," urged the Englishman.

"But, Miss Smith!" pleaded the American. A touch of the lever, a notch in the spark and the gas, and the great car leaped into the darkness.

"Oh, sir!" The girl recalled them.

"When does that limousine belong to?" Litchfield asked the driver tersely.

"That's the Bradley-Townsend's, sir."

The two took their seats. After they had gone a mile or so, Bobby put his hand on Lord Darnell's knee.

"Cheer up, old man," he said. "I know the Townsend's Philadelphia people. They've a place right on the eighteenth hole. We'll see them tomorrow."

The morning of the next day was mild and golden. It was late September, and the decorators were busy making the White Heather clubhouse beautiful for the most exclusive function of fashionable country life. To-night was the great Hunt Ball.

The "one-club" match which was to start at ten o'clock had been generally discussed, and had been made the subject of heavy wagers. Bobby Litchfield was a "crack-jack" golfer, while the Englishman was only handicapped five on the other side.

"Oh, I say," said Darnell, as they strode to the first tee in the morning, "why not go an extra guinea a hole?"

Bobby nodded, addressed the ball, and yelled "Fore!" into the empty field before him. For only answer came the caws of a dozen crows encircling a group of pine trees which divided the fair green on the first and eighteenth hole. Bobby's mallet came down upon the ball with a dull percussion, and the international match was on.

It is not within the province of the historian to discuss the ups and downs of this celebrated contest. The small and select gallery was breathless, and the two caddies grinned.

Let it be enough to say that at the sixteenth hole Bobby was one up, which the earl immediately made even on the seventeenth by dropping the ball dead to the hole, and putting it down in two-par golf.

Even up and one hole to play! The onlookers applauded the feat liberally. Bobby compressed his lips in silence and his jaw shot out. He had no idea of being beaten.

The eighteenth hole was four hundred and twenty yards over two bunkers—the tree lying within an arch of trees—with pines to the left, and the grounds of a great country estate bordering the course to the right. These virginial pines had been from time immemorial a famous convention roost for crows that gathered there each fall and spring—a few spending the whole winter. These sable and sapient birds greeted the succession of players with croaks of derision, chiding from the security of high boughs.

The earl advanced to take his honor with a deprecating smile of condescending superiority. Bobby was strong on the long game and felt sure of winning the decisive hole. At best the Englishman could only hope to halve, if he did not get into difficulty and lose.

"Yes," he said, "that was a dooed fine shot. Well, here's for another!" He swung the club mightily, promising for distance to carry the bunker, fully a hundred and fifty yards away. Whether it was the wind of a furious slice, or both, the ball sped high in the air, moving at a tremendous rate of speed. Suddenly it curved sharply to the right, left the course entirely and disappeared within the shadow of the Bradley-Townsend bungalow.

"It's a shame!" exclaimed Bobby, with real feeling. "But you don't need to play another. There's no out-of-bounds on this hole. Townsend is an old sport and he'll let us cut up his backyard grass all we want to. Fore!"

The Englishman's face settled into a fighting mold. "I don't care as long as it isn't lost. I'd play it out of the clinkers of Hades. I'll get you yet!"

At the edge of the Bradley-Townsend estate the gallery halted, while the principals in the match started to hunt the swart ball.

"Ball hunt this morning and Hunt Ball tonight," Bobby ventured, looking at the earl's grim face. The double back-acted reversible put met with no response, and Bobby shrugged his shoulders lightly.

"I think, sir," piped the caddy, "that it's in the kitchen. The winder's broken."

Litchfield rushed to the back door, and made his way in. "That's all right, Darnell," he beckoned. "Come right along. Townsend wouldn't miss it for a thousand pounds."

He pushed open the door. The Englishman followed in great excitement. The match was hole play the rule being to play the ball whatever the lie, and a lost ball was a lost hole. The players burst into the huge white kitchen. Two maids, dressed in conventional black, with white collars and cuffs, hastily turned their backs. Bobby Litchfield hurried forward, while Darnell lunged by the door.

"Excuse me," began Bobby, "we're playing a match. Did a ball come in here?"

Without turning her shoulders, a girl's soft voice answered. "Yes, sir. It's in the bread pan by the window."

"By all that's holy, it's Miss Smith!" Bobby Litchfield took three steps and confronted a tall blond maid.

"I was mixing bread, sir," she said, looking defiantly at the young man, "when it popped through the window. As the dough is all full of glass, I didn't touch it. There it is!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" belted the Englishman, throwing back his head. "Ball hunt, and Hunt Ball! Ho! Ho! Say, that's a superb joke, old man!" Then he recovered himself with a suppressed "gasp."

"I suppose I've got to play it out of there," he observed the surprise of the girl, but ignored the personal situation. "It's all right for me to raise the window; that's no hazard."

But Bobby was looking hard into evasive blue eyes. "I know," he said, "I had seen you before, but not—I didn't know."

"Can I get up on the table?" asked the Earl of Portchester sturdily.

"Surely," answered the maid. "Edith," she turned—"you clear off the table. My hands are all dough."

The Englishman, with his club to the floor, watched the second maid turn; when her profile came into view, he gasped.

"Miss Brown!" He took an involuntary step forward, and then recovered. "I say! This is jolly strange, you know."

"Not at all, sir," the brunette walked up to the table with head high. "I was assisting Polly." She clattered utensils and dishes, and then dropped a little courtesy. "There! You can get up and play it out."

But the earl had forgotten the match, the ball, the lie. All he saw was the beautiful Jacquemont face that had haunted him every waking moment.

"By George!" He looked at her with a mixture of defiance and boldness. "I'd jolly well like to call you Edith."

the girl stiffened. "Hadden't you better play out of that bread pan?" she said.

But Polly Smith was saying to the young man who followed her to the kitchen faucet where she rinsed her hands: "You didn't expect to find me one of Mrs. Bradley-Townsend's maids, did you? But I am, I am. You must never speak to me again."

"I like Polly better than Smith," said Bobby with an unembarrassed smile on his face. Then he suddenly turned to his opponent, who was floundering under black eyes. "Play ball!" he said. "And, endie!" he called, "go to my ball and watch it. Don't let anyone else play it or pick it up. Now, Darnell, you're away!"

Like a Greek chorus, from beyond the hedge, the four heard the caddy crying: "It's in the bread pan! It's in the dough! That'll lick the Britisher! Hooley!"

The Englishman fumbled with the window to raise it. The modern catch was too much for his insular brains.

"Oh, I say, Miss Brown—I mean—the instinct of the master toward the maid began to dominate him—"Brown, I can't move the blasted thing. Won't you?"

The brunette did not possess hauteur enough to withstand the piteous petition. Somehow a large hand and a small one got entangled in the process.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Lord Darnell. "You've got pretty hands—I say—" But she snatched her fingers

said the Englishman, "what an extraordinary coincidence! Where's that bally ball?"

"Very!" Bobby Litchfield answered sententiously. "I surely have seen her before!—Oh, here it is, old man!"

Wrapped in a wad of dough the dimpled ball lay like a plum in a pudding.

"Fore!" yelled Darnell, glancing backward at empty kitchen windows, "playing three!" He did not see two eager faces peering from a couple of stories above. He gave the composition a mighty swat, released the ball from its sticky envelope, and landed it with a dead thump upon the fair green.

"That's two odd," he said with a sigh. "I don't care! It was worth the loss of the hole. You're away, old man!"

The respectful and expectant gallery turned from the house to the spot where Bobby had pitched his drive. No ball was to be seen.

"Hallo, caddy!" he cried, "where's my ball?" Who took it? The boy began to whimper.

"That's my fault," he cried. "I was watching it hard when a crow came up and took it. He flew up there!" The disconsolate caddy gave a wave in the general direction of the pine woods.

The spectators stared at one another, not daring to speak in the face of such an unheard-of catastrophe. By the rules of match play, a ball has to be played where it lies, and a lost ball is a lost hole.



"He raised his club on high, and brought it down with a resounding crash upon the unexpected bread pan."

away with an arch smile as the broken window slid up.

Darnell lightly leaped upon the table and began to inspect the ball and its lie critically. Neither of the young men noticed the blaze of excitement that lighted the eyes of the two maids.

Tall, athletic, spare, in perfect condition, the Englishman towered over the bread pan upon the kitchen table. The white ball was almost out of sight in the sticky dough that only half filled the tin. If he missed the edge of the pan, it would require a master stroke to touch the ball at all. Lord Darnell measured his chances with British deliberation. He addressed the guilty dozen times with his mallet. The three hardly dared breathe in their excitement. Suddenly he seemed to see an opening, and his eyes widened with the discovery.

"Oh, I say, Miss Brown—I mean Brown—won't you come here a minute? I'll let you a five-pound box of chocolates against—that ribbon in your hair that I'll drive the ball out of doors the very first shot."

The brunette dropped a courtesy. "Oh, thank you, sir," she said, "but how will you pay me?"

"I'll jolly well find out a way," the guardsman spoke, in a voice that carried a strange compulsion. The girl crimsoned.

"Oh, very well," she faltered, and hurried back to her friend's protection.

This time the Englishman did not take a deliberate aim. Before they realized what he had done, he raised his club on high and brought it down with a resounding crash upon the unexpected bread pan. This article of culinary necessity simply crumpled up and disappeared out of the window, carrying its contents along with it and spilling them along the lawn. Darnell leaped down with a conquering grin, his angular face almost handsome.

"I say, Brown, I'll take that ribbon, if you please."

"And what do I get, Polly?" asked Bobby, advancing upon the blonde.

But Edith demurely untied her plain black ribbon and handed it to the victor.

"I say," blurted Lord Darnell, "I'll always keep this, you know: I—"

He was interrupted by a shrill cry. The men turned. In the doorway stood a huge, fat, unimpeachable cook. They did not notice that each maid held fingers of warning against pursed-up lips. There was a sudden scurry of skirts and the darkening of a further doorway. The players and the outraged cook were alone.

After a moment of golden diplomacy, the two stood on the lawn over the wounded bread pan. Neither of them was thinking much about the match. "I say,"

himself alone—staring at the palm-encircled doors. There, standing in the green frame, hesitant, like a shy rose about to open, trembled the parlor maid—while behind her, tall, stately, as if peering into paradise, loomed the lady of the dough.

The earl drew his breath in sharply as Japanese do who wish to show more than homage. Suddenly he felt a hand upon his shoulder. He turned and looked into the pale, swarthy face of his friend.

"My God!" said Bobby. "What are they doing here?"

The earl's face took on that hard, stern expression which his fellow-guardians had learned to fear and respect.

"I say, old man!" Portchester spoke with deliberation—"I don't care whether she's a parlor maid or a manure, or a wife or a widow. She's the finest woman in this room, and they're frightened and alone. I'm going to speak to them."

The Englishman knew what his decision meant—social ostracism, a blot upon his fair name, an insult to the club of which he was a guest, and a slap in the face of Senator Summer, his friend. But he tightened his hand, as if upon his sword, and went.

Bobby Litchfield did not follow. He was chagrined, but not mad. Besides, he was at home. Instead, he fastened his eyes again in stereoscopic gaze upon Polly, the blonde. He was trying to pierce the veil of memory. Where had he seen her before? Suddenly, at the moment that the Earl of Portchester bowed low before the brunette maid, he remembered. Such was his joy that he lifted his head back and laughed like a schoolboy. The abandoned man immediately became the cynosure of surprised, shocked, envious, and even a few sympathetic eyes. To dare to be natural at the Hunt Ball clinched one's career.

Mrs. Bradley-Townsend, too, frowned—was curious, and then beckoned. Bobby hurried to her side.

"Miss Brown"—his lordship's heels came together with a military click—"I did not expect—I am delighted, don't you know. May I escort you to a seat?"

Men who had started to the doorway stopped as the club's guest bent low before the most bewitching girl in the room. If it had been one of their own set, they would have crowded him out if they could. But Edith, alarmed, hesitated, and threw an appealing glance at her tall friend.

"Oh, Polly!" she whispered.

But when the Earl of Portchester stood high and looked her straight in the face with eyes in which recklessness, courage, and tenderness battled for the mastery, then she knew what he had done and what it meant to him. She put her hand upon the Englishman's arm, and with a look of command to her friend, bowed assent.

"Where shall I take you?" Lord Darnell asked gently.

"Do you see Mr. Litchfield talking to that fat lady? Take us to him," Edith could not help it. The Earl paled, and strode on.

After his formal bow, Bobby sank into the seat beside Mrs. Bradley-Townsend and whispered to her. At first she looked incredulous, glancing at the trio advancing slowly down the full length of the ballroom, and then she smiled.

"Edith," she purred in return, "is a perfect witch. I don't see how Polly Fairchild could contain her. And the Earl of Portchester?"

"Hush! He thinks her a parlor maid."

"Edith Slagmore—a parlor maid! The richest heiress in Pittsburgh! Delicious!" Mrs. Bradley-Townsend chuckled. "Why not keep it up a little longer?"

"It would serve her right," laughed Bobby. "She almost fooled me."

The three stood before the two—the girls a little defiant, with heads high; the earl as stiff as a ramrod, and as uncompromising.

"Oh, Polly, I'm so glad you've come at last! It was nice of you to bring your maid. Stand behind my chair, Brown."

Mrs. Bradley-Townsend threw into the command her latest, haughtiest tone. Edith was stunned, and then the full purport of the joke struck her in the face. She had seen, and here was the reaping.

"Allow me to present my old friend, the Earl of Portchester, Mrs. Townsend." Bobby had slipped beside the stately blonde as he made his introduction.

"And may I stand behind your chair with Miss Brown?" asked the Earl, without waiting for a reply, he took a step backward, ranging himself beside the girl, in whom humiliation and pride battled with her strong sense of humor. Mrs. Bradley-Townsend was momentarily disconcerted. To her an earl could commit no social faux pas. The solemn Englishman did not notice her twinkle as she bowed a cold assent.

"You know Mr. Litchfield, Polly," he said in which she masked the discomfiture that her joke at Edith Slagmore was not as successful as she had hoped.

But Bobby looked shamelessly into Polly's eyes. "How you have grown!" he said. "You used to be an awfully pretty girl." The goddess bit her lip. "And I was terribly fond of you when you were a kid. Don't you remember me?"

Then Bobby Litchfield wondered for a second how to go on. "But you almost did fool me," he added. "I say, do you know that I think Darnell is a Carnegie medalist? Don't look at them—"

He caught the flicker of the blue eyes that had the color of iris and the power of enchantment.

"I did—yes, I knew you all the time. That's the reason Edith and I—I have never forgotten how you taught me to ride. You were the hero then."

"Won't you take my arm?" Bobby asked quietly. "It's very warm here."

But when they had passed through the billiard room, down the corridor, over the veranda to the seats by the first tee, Bobby bent and said softly and very distinctly:

"It has been a long time, Polly, and a long search. The Brushwood Boy has found what he was waiting for. Are you sorry?"

But within the entranced breast of the son of England's bravest a heart was beating madly. He could not stand forever like a statue of a footman beside a maid. He cast a furtive look at the face before him. It burned pink.

"Miss Brown," he whispered.

"I am not Miss Brown," she said distinctly, so that her ponderous chaperone heard, and quivered with unholy joy.

"Th? I say," exclaimed his lordship. "Is that a bally American joke? Not Miss Brown? I say, who are you?"

"Edith! Stand in front of me," Mrs. Bradley-Townsend commanded.

"This, my lord," she pointed with her fan at the beautiful girl—"is a very naughty misquander, who loves to fool and mystify and wear maids' caps and cook in the kitchen. She is a very dear friend of my daughter, and is visiting us with Polly Fairchild. Her name, my lord, is Edith Brown Slagmore, and I hope that you will never forgive her."

"It has been a long time, Polly, and a long search. The Brushwood Boy has found what he was waiting for. Are you sorry?"